

REMARKS:

At the time of the Office Action, claims 1-20 were pending. Claims 1-14 and 17-20 stand rejected. Claims 15 and 16 stand objected to, but have been found to contain allowable subject matter. Pursuant to this amendment, claims 1, 9, 15 and 16 have been amended, claims 17-20 have been cancelled, and new claims 21-23 have been added. Claims 1-16 and 21-23 remain pending in the subject application.

Objected to claims 15 and 16 have been rewritten in independent form. Thus claims 15 and 16 are allowable.

Claims 1, 2, 5, 17 and 19 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Obitts (USPN 6,079,894). Claims 17, 19 and 20 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Rabinovitz (USPN 5,992,953). Claims 1, 4, 6, 7, 9, 17 and 18 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Baack (USPN 5,934,729). Claim 3 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Baack in view of Saunders (USPN 3,483,787). Claim 10 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Baack in view of Qiao (USPN 6,305,892). Claims 11-14 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Baack in view of Qiao, and further in view of Saunders. These rejections are traversed for at least the following reasons.

Without agreeing with the Examiner as to what is or is not taught by the cited references, independent claims 1 and 9 have been amended to more clearly define what it is the applicants regard as their invention. More specifically, claim 1 has been amended to recite that the at least one disc is sized and shaped to mate with and seal the open ends of the bar, and the fastener portion has been defined to include a flexible extension member extending outwardly from the end cap, such that the flexible extension member flexes as it is installed in the open ends of the bar and snaps back to its original position when the projecting member engages the aperture in the sidewall of the bar. Claim 9 has been amended to recite that the fastener plug includes a flexible extension member

extending outwardly from the end cap, across and spaced apart from the at least one disc. Since Obitts and Baack fail to teach or suggest all of the limitations now recited in amended independent claims 1 and 9, claims 1 and 9 are not anticipated Obitts and Baack. Moreover, the other art of record fails to solve the deficiencies of Obitts and Baack. Lastly, there is no teaching or suggestion in the art of record that would lead one of ordinary skill in the art to modify Obitts and/or Baack to render claims 1 and 9 obvious. Thus, claims 1 and 9 are patentable over Obitts and Baack, either taken alone or in combination with the other art of record.

Claims 2-8 and 10-16 depend from one of amended claims 1 and 9, and, therefore, are allowable for the same reasons applied thereto as well as for the additional subject matter recited in each.

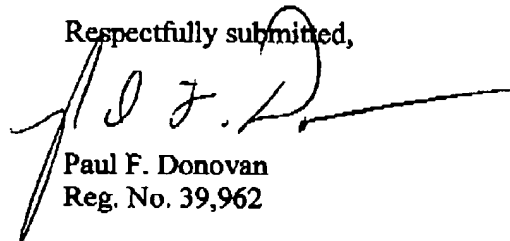
New claims 21-23 define additional patentable subject matter in view of the art of record.

No new matter has been added by way of the remarks made herein. Reconsideration and allowance of all the pending claims is respectfully requested. In the event that there are any remaining issues that need to be addressed, in order to expedite the prosecution of the subject application, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at the number indicated below.

Illinois Tool Works Inc.
3600 West Lake Avenue
Glenview, Illinois 60026

Telephone (847) 657-4075
FAX (847) 724-4160

Respectfully submitted,



Paul F. Donovan
Reg. No. 39,962